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on Wednesday, 16 July 1997, at 10.00 a.m.

President: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (E/1997/58, 73, A/52/132-E/1997/57, A/52/113-E/1997/18, E/1997/NGO/4)

Mr. KHAN (Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that the report of the Secretary-General contained in document E/1997/73 provided an overview of measures taken at the intergovernmental level and the progress achieved at inter-agency and country levels towards ensuring the integrated and coordinated follow-up of major United Nations conferences. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had set up three task forces to deal with the following questions: basic social services for all, employment and sustainable livelihoods, and enabling environment for economic and social development, as well as two inter-agency committees, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. Those bodies worked in conjunction with the Council's functional commissions, which had considerably improved their coordination, especially in the areas of poverty eradication and gender mainstreaming.

The task manager approach, which had been successfully applied within the framework of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and which had been reconfirmed at the recent extraordinary session of the General Assembly, was being gradually extended to the United Nations system as a whole through decentralized, time-bound and goal-oriented follow-up mechanisms.

According to the Secretary-General, promoting sustained and coordinated follow-up to the broad spectrum of United Nations conferences should remain a major objective of the system. Recommendations had also been made on strengthening the Council's coordinating role. The areas of responsibility of the functional commissions needed to be more clearly defined and their work programmes harmonized. The task forces' guidelines also needed to be implemented at the country level, which involved developing coherent and comprehensive guidelines for the resident coordinator system.

In September 1997, the ACC would be organizing an inter-agency workshop, bringing together field representatives of the organizations and representatives of Governments, in preparation for the comprehensive review of

the task forces scheduled for its second regular session of 1997. The Council would consider the outcome of that review at its 1998 session, when it would provide appropriate guidance to the system.

The CHAIRMAN introduced the speakers of the panel discussion and gave them the floor.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences constituted a comprehensive development agenda with many common themes. In order to assist Governments integrate those elements into their national policies and programmes, the United Nations system should begin by mobilizing a coherent response. That was why the ACC had set up task forces and inter-agency committees, which were ready to make their initial reports to the Council.

At its first regular session for 1997, the ACC had decided to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the overall progress in promoting the coordinated follow-up to conferences, including a review of the effective utilization of the end products of the task forces, of activities at country level, in particular through the system of resident coordinators, and of the streamlining of reporting requirements. The purpose of the workshop scheduled for September 1997 would be to develop proposals on those points for submission to the ACC at its second regular session for 1997.

One of the primary needs was follow-up at the country level. Task forces, which it should be remembered were ad hoc in nature and time bound, were there to provide guidance to resident coordinators. The Administrator of the UNDP had requested the coordinators to set up thematic groups, which would be the equivalent of task forces at the local level. Such groups already existed in many countries.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, placed under the Population Fund's responsibility, had emphasized the need to enhance cooperation among United Nations organizations at the country level, primarily through the resident coordinator system. The representatives of 19 organizations had attended the first meeting of the Task Force, whose work programme had been sent to all resident coordinators. Since its establishment in 1996, the Task Force had met twice. Its Working Groups on Primary Health

Care (lead agency, World Health Organization (WHO)), on International Migration (lead agency, International Labour Organization (ILO)) and on a Common Approach to National Capacity-Building in Tracking Child and Maternal Mortality (lead agency, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) had all met once, while the Working Group on Reproductive Health had met twice. The regional commissions had actively participated in the Task Force.

Five outputs had been produced as a result. A wall chart on basic social services, based on 13 indicators, would be widely distributed and was already available on the Internet; the data would be updated periodically to enable countries to monitor their progress towards reaching conference goals. An advocacy card explaining the reasons for investing in basic social services had been prepared. Guidelines on basic education, primary health care, reproductive health care, promoting women's empowerment and international migration had been prepared for resident coordinators in order to encourage them to build partnerships and to mobilize resources for action in those areas. A Technical Symposium on International Migration was to take place in the second quarter of 1998; the Steering Committee, comprising several organizations, had finalized the agenda for the Symposium, which would be hosted by the Netherlands Government. A Report on Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Donor Collaboration in Social Sector Assistance, based on case studies concerning Bangladesh, Kenya and Peru, was being finalized by the UNDP and the World Bank. Lastly, a Compendium of International Commitments Relevant to Poverty and Social Integration was being updated by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

In order to derive full benefits from those products, contacts had been established with the United Nations Staff College in Turin with a view to including a module on the use of those materials in the training programme for resident coordinators. National counterparts and field staff in general should also be encouraged to become familiar with the materials, which could serve as advocacy tools, in particular for the 20/20 Initiative. They could also be used by the regional commissions and for common country assessments. The indicators prepared by the Task Force should help countries to improve their statistical data. The Task Force was particularly keen that the products should be used by the theme groups. It would make every effort to revise and fine tune the materials.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, UNDP) said that the Task Force had obtained some impressive results in a relatively short space of time and had shown initiative in several important areas. It was worth mentioning that the conclusions of the study on cooperation for development recently carried out by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) were very much in line with the objectives of the follow-up to major United Nations conferences. In view of those complementary aspects, the Administrator of UNDP had brought together the heads of the Task Forces and the DAC Chairman with a view to improving the synergy between United Nations organizations and the community of donors.

Ms. HAGEN (Deputy Director-General, International Labour Office (ILO)) said that the Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, coordinated by the ILO, had decided to undertake a number of comprehensive country-level employment reviews, in order to assess policies related to employment, to provide lessons of experience based on those country reviews and to demonstrate that United Nations organizations could work together at the country level in order to diagnose each country's problems and suggest policy alternatives for the achievement of full employment and reduction of poverty. A framework had been adopted for the reviews, encompassing the major features affecting the level and quality of employment. Reviews had been conducted in Hungary, Nepal, Indonesia, Morocco, Zambia, Mozambique and Chile.

On the basis of the reviews, the Task Force had drawn up the main lines of a plan of action to promote employment. Governments had to begin by establishing sound macroeconomic policies and by investing in human capital, while targeting interventions for the vulnerable and the extremely poor. Productive employment had to be expanded in rural areas, in both the farm and non-farm sectors, while an effort should be made to promote small enterprises and the informal sector, where concerted action was needed to improve the quality of employment. Generally speaking, increasing productivity and improving competitiveness depended on better education and improved training of the labour force, as well as on developing managerial capacity in both the public and private sectors. The importance of an institutional framework suited to good governance could not be overstated.

Strategies for full employment had to be based on the broadest possible dialogue with all social partners. Targeted measures had to be taken to provide more jobs and better qualifications for women, as well as progressively to eliminate child labour. Targeted schemes should continue to support the employment and incomes of the poorer and more vulnerable groups. Programmes aimed at restricting activities harmful to the environment should be introduced with the aim of achieving sustainable development. Liberalization and structural adjustment policies should be pursued in order to stimulate greater private sector participation and greater integration into the world economy. Lastly, high rates of growth of employment and incomes had to be achieved worldwide if the creation of a global market was to be beneficial to all.

All the country reviews had been completed by February and a synthesis report had been submitted to the ACC in April. What was learnt from the exercise procedurally was as important as what was learnt substantively. Firstly, it was found that country reviews were difficult to do at a comprehensive inter-agency level. Complementarities should therefore be emphasized without necessarily requiring the direct engagement of all agencies. Secondly, the review process should be profiled to fit the needs of individual countries, since the latter had different approaches and did not all need the system's prescriptions. Thirdly, the review process had proved useful for consensus-building on the nature of the employment problem and in designing policies and implementation mechanisms to resolve it. It had provided an opportunity to focus on labour market developments and to identify critical issues which might not otherwise have been accorded the priority they deserved. Lastly, the review process had provided good examples of areas where further assistance might be sought from the United Nations system. At the country level, the agencies should be encouraged to undertake joint reviews of their activities related to employment and sustained livelihoods in order to promote information sharing and the pooling of resources in closely related activities.

The Task Force having completed its mandate, follow-up implementation was under way at the country level. The possibility should be considered of transferring information from the review exercises by conducting regional or subregional seminars and by publishing the reports in local languages. It

would also be helpful to conduct an interregional seminar where representatives of the countries involved could exchange information and experiences. If the reviews were continued in other countries, lead agency involvement should be more carefully worked out. The ILO, for instance, had learned the importance of focusing its energies and resources on its core competences.

In conjunction with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Task Force had also addressed the impact of globalization and technological change on employment; it had carried out an in-depth study of sustainable livelihoods and had considered the development of more effective indicators of employment and sustainability. The ILO had appreciated the responsibility of serving as lead agency of the Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods and had been active in supporting the efforts of the other task forces. It looked forward to seeing how the Secretary-General would propose adapting the lead agency concept to inter-agency issue management.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, UNDP) praised the ILO representative and her Task Force for successfully completing their mandate. He found the idea of organizing country workshops with the different partners to discuss the conclusions of the reviews particularly interesting. Possible ways of implementing the task forces' guidelines in individual countries would need to be considered at intergovernmental level and, in the last resort, by the Economic and Social Council itself.

Ms. KING (Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) recalled that the Council, following its debate on system-wide gender mainstreaming, had concluded that systematic monitoring was necessary to ensure that its functional commissions make gender mainstreaming a reality in all conference follow-up. Welcoming the establishment of inter-agency arrangements concerning the advancement of women and gender equality, she said that the gender perspective also needed to be reflected in the work of other thematic and sectoral task forces established at the country level for conference follow-up and that there was a need to develop adequate means for assessing the progress actually accomplished.

The Standing Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, established in 1996, would provide the means to influence the mainstream, to

end the marginalization of women's concerns and to achieve the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Committee's role was to shape a system-wide response in order to support the implementation of the Platform for Action and in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the United Nations system.

Regarding the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Committee would contribute to the mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women. The review would provide the opportunity not only to assess what progress had been made but also what impact the Platform had on the overall work of the system. The review coincided with the analysis of national strategies which was being carried out by the Commission on the Status of Women. The Committee was also contributing to the consideration of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. At its following session, it would for example focus on women and health, which was an issue to be considered by the Commission in 1999.

With regard to the second aspect of its mandate, namely gender mainstreaming, the Committee had brought a number of principles to the attention of the ACC, which would lead to the issuance of administrative instructions or similar action by members of the ACC to ensure that the gender mainstreaming policy was consistently implemented in all departments and organizations of the United Nations system. The conclusions which the Council would be adopting at the end of its session would strengthen those efforts considerably. The Committee was also developing a number of tools to ensure accountability and to develop assessment and performance indicators. The Committee intended to build upon a range of experiences in that area, and would be considering the possibility of using or adapting existing tools and indicators. It would be holding a meeting in September with the Development Assistance Committee expert group on women in development. It had also established a working group to develop guidelines for budgeting processes and should be in a position to put forward some concrete preliminary results in that respect in time for the Council's February session.

Like its predecessor, the Committee would contribute to the preparation of reports to intergovernmental bodies. It would aim for truly integrated reporting, where the advancement of women and gender equality were reflected as a matter of course in all sectoral areas, such as population, poverty,

social cohesion, employment, human rights, shelter and food security. It would continue to work in close collaboration with its other partners to provoke dialogue, to develop and apply methodologies and to evaluate progress, so that gender equality could be achieved throughout the system in planning and programming by the year 2000.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, UNDP) thanked Ms. King for her statement, from which it emerged that, while much had already been achieved, a great deal still remained to be done operationally to ensure gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality could play a very useful role in coordinating such efforts. He noted that all speakers had in some way or other referred to the need for an enabling environment for the achievement of objectives.

Mr. MALLOCH-BROWN (World Bank) cautioned delegates that the Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development had not yet held its final meeting and that its findings were therefore preliminary. The Task Force was made up of three sub-groups. The first sub-group, in charge of capacity-building for governance and chaired by UNDP, had issued its final report in June. The report was based on individual agency reviews of best practices and lessons learnt, and it contained a number of recommendations to guide the ACC. In the first place, there was an evident need to elaborate a common conceptual framework on governance for country-level programming by the United Nations system. Secondly, that issue had to be incorporated in existing country-level programming tools, such as country strategy notes and common country assessments. Lastly, there was a need to initiate action-oriented research on the effects of growing globalization on national governance structures and on approaches to national capacity-building for governance in a global economy.

The second of the Task Force's sub-groups, chaired by the World Bank, was in charge of the macroeconomic and social framework. The sub-group's goal was to highlight points of convergence among all agencies by focusing on country case studies concerning inter-agency coordination. The five case studies completed (in Viet Nam, Hungary, Mexico, Uganda and Zambia) concerned the following thematic areas: macroeconomic reforms, policies for external trade and investment, the relative roles of the public and private sectors,

human capital development strategies and rural development. What had emerged was a high degree of convergence among all agencies, especially regarding the need for a sound macroeconomic framework coupled with significant investments in the social sector. It had been found that the main factor affecting the level of coordination was the capacity and desire of governments to become engaged in the coordination process. The coordination of activities of the United Nations system in the end depended on the governments themselves. Coordination was most effective in countries, such as Hungary, where the Government took charge and coordinated the agencies' priorities. Coordination efforts should therefore be focused on those countries where the public authorities were not in a position to play a central coordinating role, especially since the studies had also shown that coordination was not without expense, in terms of time and financial resources.

The Task Force's third sub-group was responsible for indicators. As in the case of the other Task Forces, an effort had been made to elaborate a series of system-wide performance indicators.

In conclusion, the Task Force was satisfied that it had been able to contribute towards fostering a common approach among agencies. It had completed its task and could retire. The time had come to take action in the field, which was where the Conference recommendations actually had to be applied.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, UNDP) thanked the representative of the World Bank for his clear presentation of the work of the Task Force he had chaired. His final report, together with those of the other task forces, would be used by the ACC to prepare conclusions for submission to the Council.

The CHAIRMAN congratulated all the speakers on their extremely useful statements. It was the first time that the Council had included the question of the follow-up to world conferences on its agenda, and he was sure that the topic would continue to attract a great deal of attention. The strong interest raised by world conferences in public opinion placed a heavy responsibility on the United Nations system, which was that of fulfilling expectations by implementing the commitments which had been undertaken, in other words, by moving from the stage of declarations to that of action. That required a joint approach, which it was up to the Council to organize. World

conferences had also highlighted the need, in responding to the globalization process without opposing it, to focus on the human factor and on social and environmental considerations. Lastly, it was worth noting that the system of task forces had led to very frank discussions on issues and constituted an interesting experiment in cooperation which could be useful for the future.

Mr. KAMANDO (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) said that while the outcomes and commitments reached at the world conferences organized during the 1990s were of paramount importance to the developing countries, their effective implementation meant providing additional resources to those countries, especially the least advanced. The Economic and Social Council had responsibilities for coordination, guidance and conference follow-up. In order to fulfil those responsibilities, it needed to review its work programme and working methods. There was also a need for a debate on the outcome of the comprehensive progress review to be undertaken by ACC at its regular session scheduled for November 1997, in order to enhance the coordinated follow-up of conferences. The outcome of major conferences should not be left to the secretariats and inter-agency machinery alone, but should be considered within the framework of the Council's 1995 agreed conclusions, in which it had decided to make the coordinated follow-up to conferences a focus of its activities.

Mr. IBRAHIM (Malaysia) asked for details concerning the cost of coordination referred to by the World Bank representative.

Mr. ARDA (Turkey) said that the coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major conferences was a responsibility which rested both on the secretariat and on Member States. In his view, policy coordination and integration should be a bottom-up process, beginning with the resident representatives and building upwards. Donor coordination was extremely important from a practical point of view. Following up the outcomes of major conferences required instituting a process of analysis. It was worth noting, furthermore, that parity between men and women had not yet been achieved among staff of the United Nations system.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) wanted to know whether there was a compendium of current activities at country level for the follow-up to major conferences. Individual countries might be encouraged by what had been achieved by others and might draw lessons from it.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) agreed with the Chairman's view that a question such as the follow-up to major conferences could not be dealt with in a single day. The Council should give more thought to the subject, and he was prepared to support any proposal the Chairman might care to make in that respect.

Mr. FERNANDEZ (Spain) wanted to know whether, in the opinion of the panellists, the interaction between the work of the task forces and the follow-up activities conducted by Governments was satisfactory, on the two very different levels of funds and programmes on the one hand and functional commissions on the other.

Mr. HYNES (Canada) endorsed the view of the observer for the United Republic of Tanzania that the follow-up to major conferences should not be left to the secretariat alone. It had to be recognized, however, that the latter had achieved much more in that regard than the Governments. He wondered how communication could be improved between the ACC and inter-secretariat mechanisms on the one hand and intergovernmental bodies on the other. Might more regular information meetings be useful in that respect? He also wanted to know what the other guest speakers thought of the comment made by the World Bank representative, to the effect that the task forces had completed the task for which they had been created and should gradually fade away. In his view, the activities carried out by the task forces should be transferred to the field. He wondered whether it might not be advisable to continue at inter-secretariat level the follow-up work to major conferences, the importance of which extended well after the end of the conferences themselves.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, UNDP), replying to the question by the representative of Bangladesh, said that as from 1997 resident coordinators had to give account of the follow-up to major conferences in their annual reports, and they had received guidelines to that effect. They had to report whether they had been applied and if not, why not, to what extent set objectives had been achieved and which problems remained to be resolved at intergovernmental or inter-secretariat level. Reports from some countries were already available and could be forwarded to any delegations which were interested.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, UNFPA) said that the question of working methods and the establishment of task force reports was a major issue. One suggestion would be for task forces to suspend their work for the time being and then meet again on an ad hoc basis, whenever the need arose. Drawing up reports for the many commissions was a heavy task. It might be enough for each task force to report to individual commissions only on the aspect of its work which concerned that particular commission. Among the objectives decided by major conferences, the Council might consider selecting a number of themes on which the reports could focus. If the Council was equipped with a substantive secretariat - as the Secretary-General was about to propose - that secretariat could study the descriptive reports and extract questions of general policy, which would be submitted to the Council for decision. That would enable the Council fully to play its role as a debating forum, where the major issues derived from all the commissions would be studied.

Ms. HAGEN (Deputy Director-General, ILO) commended the excellent collaboration between the Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods and regional commissions, in particular the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Coordination with the Commission for Social Development had also been excellent, while the interaction between task forces and regional or functional commissions appeared very positive. Of course, coordination entailed a cost, but that was unavoidable. There was a need therefore to devote as many resources as possible to coordinating programmes at country level and as few resources as possible to "talking about" coordination. The solution might be, as the Secretary-General had suggested, to make one organization responsible for the follow-up to every major conference, so as to ensure that the activities of the different organizations were complementary and that their efforts did not overlap. In reply to questions concerning relations between task forces and intergovernmental bodies, it could be said that the ILO's Governing Body attached a great deal of importance to conference follow-up, especially with regard to promoting employment and the fundamental rights of workers. The ILO had concentrated on supplying the services requested by member States, which meant mobilizing the resources of ILO and of the United Nations system in general to respond to the requirements of Governments and social partners.

Ms. KING (Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), in reply to the question by the representative of Bangladesh, said that what the Council could do was to continue monitoring on a very regular basis and ensuring that decisions taken by the functional commissions were transmitted to other bodies. That would be a way for the Council to ensure consistent policies, not in particular sectors, but across sectors. Replying to the question by the representative of Malaysia, she said one example of cost was travel expenses for staff. Preparing a compendium, as suggested by the representative of Bangladesh, would undoubtedly be useful, but might not be feasible, considering current restrictions on the length of documents. One possibility might be to collect and disseminate the best practices implemented in different countries. The task forces had been encouraged to make more regular arrangements to cooperate with other bodies (such as UNFPA, UNDP, etc.). A last point was that the secretariats of the United Nations system could never achieve the objective of gender parity unless the States themselves contributed to that effort, for instance, by offering sufficient women candidates.

Mr. MALLOCH-BROWN (World Bank) pointed out that he had referred to the sunsetting of task forces, not that of world conferences. All the organizations of the United Nations system had already incorporated the task forces' objectives in their own work programmes and organizational structures, so that there was little point keeping the task forces. The World Bank favoured strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council, precisely to deal with that kind of problem, namely ensuring the follow-up to major conferences. While Governments were responsible for improving matters, it had to be remembered that the Council was an intergovernmental body. The cost of coordination was only partially financial, and was in fact much higher in terms of human resources. Coordination for coordination's sake was a real danger to be avoided.

Mr. AARDAL (Observer for Norway) asked the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women how the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality actually managed to perform its task, since it was responsible not only for studying the implementation of the Platform of Action

adopted in Beijing, but also for considering the many problems related to the advancement of women arising from other international conferences, such as Habitat II.

Mr. WINNICK (United States) expressed agreement with many of the comments made by the observer for the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and by the representative of Canada.

In the light of the opinion expressed by the Executive Director of UNFPA, to the effect that the Council's functional commissions should add more focus to their conference follow-up activities, there was no doubt that it was up to the Council to take action in that respect. At the same time, however, it would be worth implementing a monitoring mechanism through the ACC and regional commissions.

Several speakers had warned against an excess of coordination and they were right. In any event, coordination should be better among Government representatives to intergovernmental bodies. Since responsibilities were not clearly defined, conflicts, though avoidable, did tend to break out, leading to contradictory decisions.

In the view of the United States delegation, the debate should in particular enable the Council to give more specific guidelines to the ACC and to receive a more useful regular contribution in return, since one of the permanent duties of the ACC should be to inform the Council's Bureau.

Mr. HUIMASALO (Finland) said that the enthusiasm of yesteryear appeared to have evaporated. With so many plans of action remaining unfinished, perhaps the time had come to resort to advocacy and to rediscover a taste for action.

Mr. FELTON (United Kingdom), said that there should be a way of institutionalizing a mechanism, which would not necessarily be the same as the inter-agency task forces of the ACC, but which would fulfil the same role. It was essential to have such a mechanism, if only because indicators changed and because the information needed for action in the field had to be as accurate as possible.

The Secretary-General had rightly pointed out in his report that for a detailed examination of provisions in a given area, intergovernmental work had

to benefit from inputs from the countries concerned. It would be interesting for the panellists to explain how they thought the operational effects of major conferences could be measured.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, UNDP) noted that the various questions reflected the concern of Council members for the need to ensure conference follow-up, to maintain the necessary dynamism and to produce concrete results. There was no doubt that the ACC and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) should ensure that continuity.

It did not appear that the enthusiasm which had inspired the major conferences had waned. Nevertheless, it was up to Council members and to the agencies together to provide country teams with the right tools to ensure the best possible follow-up in the field. It was clear from the DAC documentation that the objectives decided at major conferences also remained priorities for the donors. The UNDP was doing more than it had done in the past, especially in the area of poverty eradication.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, UNFPA), replying to a question by the representative of Spain, gave an idea of how the funds and programmes were related to the Council's functional commissions. While the Commission on Population and Development, for instance, had already selected a series of themes for the years ahead, it had been agreed that the UNFPA would be responsible at country level for organizing practical activities. The Council ought to apply the same method of mainstreaming and follow-up to all major conference themes.

The representative of the United States had mentioned the role which should be played by the ACC. In her view, it would be worth, together with the Council Bureau, considering ways of organizing follow-up by intergovernmental bodies. Every functional commission should officially be given the task of dealing with the theme of a major conference, which would enable it to focus its work. It would also save the funds and programmes from having to report to so many commissions.

On the side of the donors, the members of the DAC had been quite right in recognizing that the United Nations funds and programmes had to be equipped

with basic indicators. But they also needed a common approach, so that Governments were better able to coordinate the activities of United Nations agencies and were no longer obliged to bow to donors' wishes.

The CCPOQ should be approached through the ACC, since it was used to designating a lead agency for operational activities and would therefore have no problem selecting one for conference follow-up. Since advocacy became more effective when there was a body in the field in charge of directing operational activities, the same would probably be true if a lead agency were designated for follow-up activities. A mechanism of that kind was needed for further implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, for which mobilization was not as strong as it should be.

Ms. HAGEN (Deputy Director-General, ILO) said that the discussion appeared to be pointing towards an institutionalization of ACC inter-agency task forces, which meant adding more bureaucracy, instead of trimming and rationalizing. Ideally, the task forces' job should be transferred to an existing organization, with a request for the latter to reorganize its priorities and budget accordingly.

The same applied to the interaction between the Council and the ACC, which many speakers appeared to believe should be taken further. The ACC was so diversified that it was not suitable as a coordinating body. There again it would be preferable to make use of a different component of the system.

For the sake of greater efficiency, the functional commissions on the other hand could be asked to undertake new responsibilities and should have their scope extended, especially since the danger of a loss of enthusiasm appeared very real. It was undoubtedly up to the Council to revive the commitments undertaken at major conferences.

There was also a very real danger not only that Governments should issue contradictory instructions concerning the follow-up to the outcomes of major conferences, but also that controversies should arise regarding the best approach, owing to policy disagreements regarding the action to be taken by Governments or by the United Nations system. In that respect, the conference follow-up process required full consensus.

Ms. KING (Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), replying to the Observer for Norway, said that following the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Inter-Agency

Committee on Women and Gender Equality had unanimously been considered to be the ideal intersectoral body to carry out a very broad mandate. The time had come, however, for that mandate to be more focused. The Committee was not currently dealing specifically with the follow-up to Habitat II, but it was making inputs to related activities.

The representative of Finland had deplored a loss of vitality. It was true that the follow-up to the outcome on the Beijing Conference had suffered some delay. The lack of enthusiasm in that case, however, was to be blamed more on the Governments than on the secretariat.

Mr. MALLOCH-BROWN (World Bank) said that in the World Bank's view, the Council had always shown an exceptional ability to advocate the causes it had adopted and to achieve a broad consensus. It should therefore remain committed to that goal and should provide its subsidiary bodies and intergovernmental bodies in general with a set of common political objectives to be achieved through coordinated action.

The CHAIRMAN in his summing up said that it was clear from the opening statements and the ensuing discussion that the specificity of lead agencies and inter-agency task forces in no way prevented them from displaying genuine unity. All the parties concerned had become convinced that global macroeconomic stability had to be accompanied by "macrosocial" stability, whence the need to coordinate and rationalize activities.

From the point of view of working methods, there seemed to be a need for very strict monitoring of the fulfilment of objectives. The emphasis should also be firmly placed on disseminating best practices and developing concrete tools. Moreover, a clear consensus had emerged regarding horizontal mainstreaming, in the sense of establishing linkages between the functional commissions themselves and also between those commissions and the funds and programmes and field agencies. There was similar agreement regarding the need for a common database of national and international indicators, as well as the need for agencies operating in the field to be capped by a strong Council, which would have the effect of making them stronger in return.

With regard more specifically to the follow-up to the outcomes of major conferences, all the speakers had called for an integrated approach. That was the central issue to be addressed by the Council, which should conduct a regular intergovernmental review. Once it had been accepted that the Council

should assume the lead in that respect, and should do so on a permanent basis, it was then a question of determining how it could carry out the task. There had been practically general agreement regarding the desirability of maintaining the functions of the ACC's inter-agency task forces, though it was uncertain what form those functions would take. Some had emphasized the need to be better informed about the experience acquired by the task forces. It had to be recognized that there might be some policy disagreements regarding the best follow-up approach to adopt. Despite such difficulties, however, the search for coordination should continue.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.